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## **KEEP HOLIDAYS SAFE AND HAPPY, URGES FIRE MARSHAL**

BISMARCK – State Fire Marshal Raymond Lambert reminds everyone that a few simple safety precautions will keep the holidays safe and happy. “Beautiful decorations are traditional in the lives of North Dakotans, but it is important to remember that these decorations can lead to added fire risks if safety precautions are not followed,” said Lambert

Many people choose to use natural cut trees to decorate their homes. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission there are approximately 400 Christmas tree fires in the US annually, accounting for 10 fatalities, 80 injuries, and 15 million dollars in property damage.

A live tree should be kept well watered the entire time the tree is inside a home. If needles begin to fall in large quantities, it is a sign the tree is dangerously dry and should be removed from the home immediately. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.

“Always make sure to unplug tree lights and other lighted holiday decorations before leaving the house or going to bed. Don’t let your holiday plans go up in smoke,” said Lambert, who offered these additional fire safety tips:

- Use only “cool lamp” or miniature holiday lights for inside decorations, and make sure the lights have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. Lighted decorations with loose or frayed wires, missing lights, or damaged plugs should not be used.
- Portable space heaters should be turned off every time you leave the room or go to bed.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, chimney connectors and all other solid-fueled heating equipment inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned as often as inspections suggest. Use only wood that is properly seasoned to reduce creosote build-up. Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container.
- Make sure trees and other decorations do not block exit doors or fire escape access. Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces and radiators. Try to position the tree near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances.
- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep. Keep candles away from things that can catch fire, such as clothing, books, paper, curtains, Christmas trees, or decorations. Don’t place lit candles in windows, where they may ignite blinds or curtains.

“Fire safety year around is important, but during the holiday season the potential for fire is greater. Working smoke alarms and a planned and practiced exit plan is a must,” adds Lambert.

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